

# Chapter 14

## Reflecting on the Viability of Liberalism

### Key Skill:

Analyzing sources, making decisions, and defending a personal response to an issue based on your values and experiences

### Key Terms and Concepts:

- Anti-terrorism Act
- censorship
- Emergencies Act
- pandemics
- racism
- resource use and development
- terrorism
- USA PATRIOT Act
- War Measures Act

### Key Issue:

*To what extent should we embrace an ideology?*

### Related Issue:

*To what extent are the values of liberalism viable?*

### Chapter Issue:

**To what extent are the values of liberalism viable in response to issues today?**

### Question for Inquiry #1:

**In what situations should liberal values be limited?**

### Question for Inquiry #2:

**What challenges can force societies to reconsider liberalism?**

As you read at the start of Chapter 10, the 1960s series *Star Trek*—though science fiction—depicted many issues that people wrestled with in that era. Throughout the years, the series changed in many respects, but the one thing that stayed the same was the Prime Directive, the statement of principles agreed upon by the United Federation of Planets and that guided Starfleet commanders and their crews in their encounters with new life forms in the galaxy.

*We shall do all within our power to leave the development of any and all cultures to their own devices, to let them flourish or fail as their differing gifts allow, and to prevent any and all who would deprive them of this, the most basic right, from performing self-serving and selfish actions at the expense of the innocents, until such time as they, themselves, come forward, as equals, and mindful of their place within the greater whole.*

—Source: Christopher Sherwood. “The Prime Directive of the United Federation of Planets,” Teaching Resources, *The Universal Declaration: The Preamble, the Proclamation and the Prime Directive*, Atlantic Human Rights Centre (AHRC), [http://w3.stu.ca/stu/sites/ahrc/middle\\_high1.html](http://w3.stu.ca/stu/sites/ahrc/middle_high1.html).

Is *Star Trek*’s Prime Directive in keeping with liberal values? If so, which values and what parts of the text above support your opinion? To what extent do liberal values contribute to successful responses by governments to issues today, such as terrorism, poverty, and environmental or health concerns?



◀ **Figure 14-1** In one episode of *Star Trek Voyager*, sentient (feeling) robots force chief engineer B’Elanna Torres to construct a robot prototype. Torres agrees, but then destroys her prototype when she learns that it will be used to wipe out a competing race of robots. In what way does her decision uphold the Prime Directive?

## Chapter Issue:

*To what extent are the values of liberalism viable in response to issues today?*

Liberalism, like any ideology, has critics as well as supporters and it faces challenges today. This chapter will help you explore liberalism in today's world and the extent to which citizens or governments might embrace it when faced with different issues. There are different aspects to this exploration:

- To what extent is liberalism *viable*—can it function and is it practical today as a set of values that can guide governments' and citizens' responses to issues?
- Can you, or should you, embrace an ideology as a whole, or can you pick and choose aspects of an ideology to embrace?

Previous chapters in this text helped you explore liberalism and its values. Liberalism's values include the belief that individuals should be free to make decisions regarding their own lives. The focus on values of individualism, such as self-interest and competition, is key to liberalism and most democracies, yet humans live in societies that also can have some collective interests or needs. To what extent can a group survive or prosper, however, when individuals within that group are each making their own decisions? Imagine a car with ten steering wheels and ten drivers, each driver wanting to go his or her own way! To consider the group as well as the individual, liberalism evolved, as you saw in Figure 4-15 on page 109. What are the best ways to support the common good in a liberal democratic society? What values are most viable to guide decisions made by governments and by citizens in response to issues?

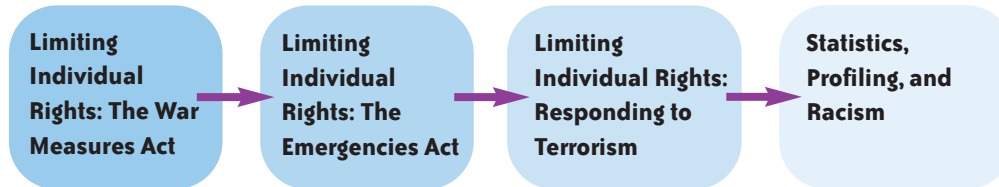
That brings us back to the Chapter Issue: *To what extent are the values of liberalism viable in response to issues today?* *Viable* means feasible, or practical. As you read this chapter, think about the **viability of liberalism** and whether the values of liberalism are practical in all situations. Can liberalism survive in whole or in part in the face of these challenges?

## Limiting the Values of Liberalism

### Question for Inquiry

#### 1. In what situations should liberal values be limited?

### In this section ...



In Canadian society, individuals generally enjoy the expressions of the values of liberalism every day without ever really thinking about them. For example, you might

- express yourself freely
- consider yourself to be valued and judged as an individual, based on your individual actions
- go where you please, and do what you want according to your own self-interest

However, some situations encourage people and their governments to place limits on the ways people practise or live out the values of liberalism. In the following pages, we will look at some of these situations. As you consider these situations, think again about the Chapter Issue: *To what extent are the values of liberalism viable in response to issues today?*

### Limiting Individual Rights: The War Measures Act

In Chapter 13, you considered government bodies and practices and some ways in which they may not reflect liberal values. Here, you will explore some government decisions and pieces of legislation that are seen by many critics as undemocratic or not fully reflecting liberal values. These laws are used only in uncommon situations to temporarily limit individual rights and freedoms. As was noted in Chapter 11 regarding government decisions and the will of the people (page 298), the **War Measures Act** was one such law.

In most democracies, instances of the suspension of individual civil liberties are rare. In Canada's history, it has happened only three times. Chapter 11 discussed how civil liberties were suspended under the War Measures Act during the October Crisis of 1970, raising serious questions about the government following the will of the people. Before then, the War Measures Act had been used twice, during the First and Second World Wars.

**Figure 14-2** Map of internment camps in Canada during and immediately after the First World War.



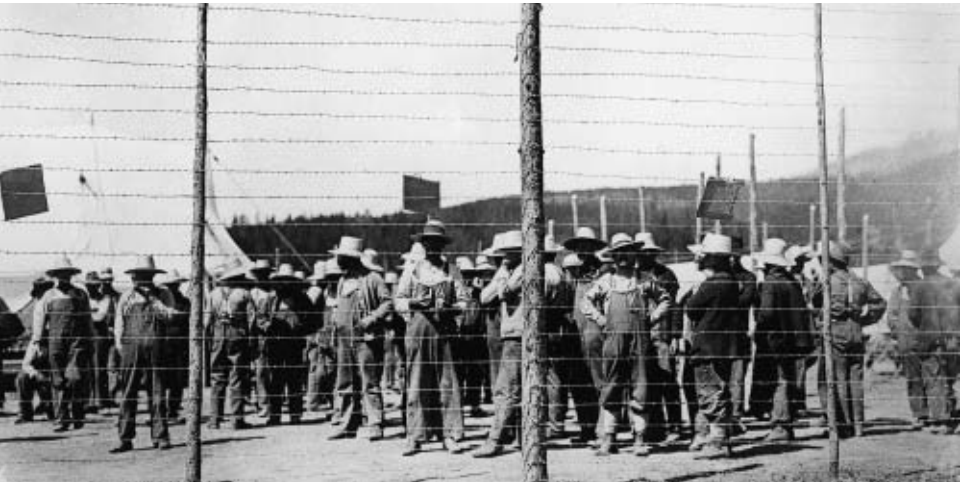
Source: InfoUkes Inc., <http://www.infoukes.com/history/images/internment/gulag/gulag.gif>.

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Phrases such as *enemy alien* and *friendly fire* are war terms used to bring out an emotional response, or perhaps to lessen an emotional response.

The War Measures Act was passed in 1914, soon after the outbreak of the First World War. This gave the federal Cabinet wide-ranging powers to deal with issues of national security. Authorities had the power to arrest and detain, or hold, anyone suspected of being disloyal to Canada or sympathetic to the enemy (Germany and Austria-Hungary, including Ukraine). Over 8000 people of all ages—Canadians of German and mostly Ukrainian descent—were arrested and detained under difficult conditions in internment camps across Canada. The majority were civilians rather than prisoners of war.

**Figure 14-3** Prisoners in an internment camp near Banff, Alberta, October 28, 1914. During the First World War, there were 24 internment camps in Canada, holding 8500 people. Approximately 3100 of these were “enemy combatants,” or genuine prisoners of war; the rest were civilians. Most of them were ethnic Ukrainians born in territories controlled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, one of Germany’s allies in the war. Some were naturalized British subjects or Canadian-born children of Ukrainian immigrants.





Ten thousand other Ukrainians were required to report to the local authorities every month and an additional 80 000 people were disenfranchised (denied the right to vote). All of these people were denied their legal rights and declared enemy aliens under the War Measures Act. Some Ukrainian internees remained in camps until 1920, after the war had ended and when the War Measures Act was no longer in effect. Many interned people worked on government projects such as public roadways without compensation.

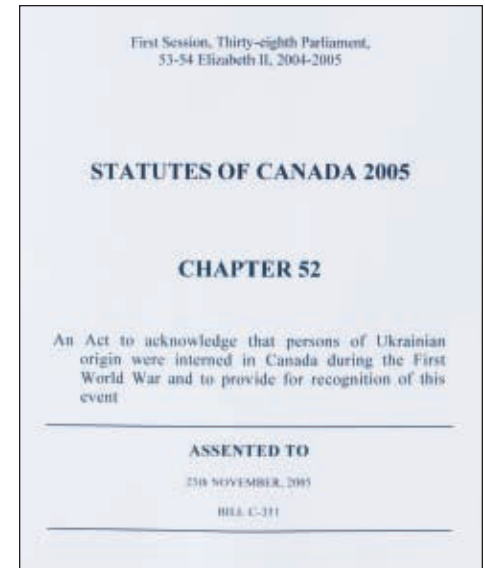
During the Second World War, Japan, Italy, and Germany were enemies to Canada, the US, and Britain. As had occurred during the First World War, the War Measures Act was invoked. More than 22 000 Japanese Canadians were forced to leave their communities and relocate to isolated areas; some were also arrested and interned. Some Canadians of German and Italian descent were also declared enemy aliens, arrested, and interned.

Most of the Japanese Canadians affected were families in communities on British Columbia's west coast. The government ordered that they be moved away from the coastline for perceived security reasons. These Japanese Canadians were loaded onto trains and moved inland, largely to remote communities in BC. They were not permitted to leave the camps without RCMP permission. After initially promising to look after the property of relocated Japanese Canadians, the government decided in 1943 to sell off their homes, businesses, and possessions. In 1988, Canada's government formally apologized to Japanese Canadians and provided compensation to those who had experienced forced relocation during the Second World War.

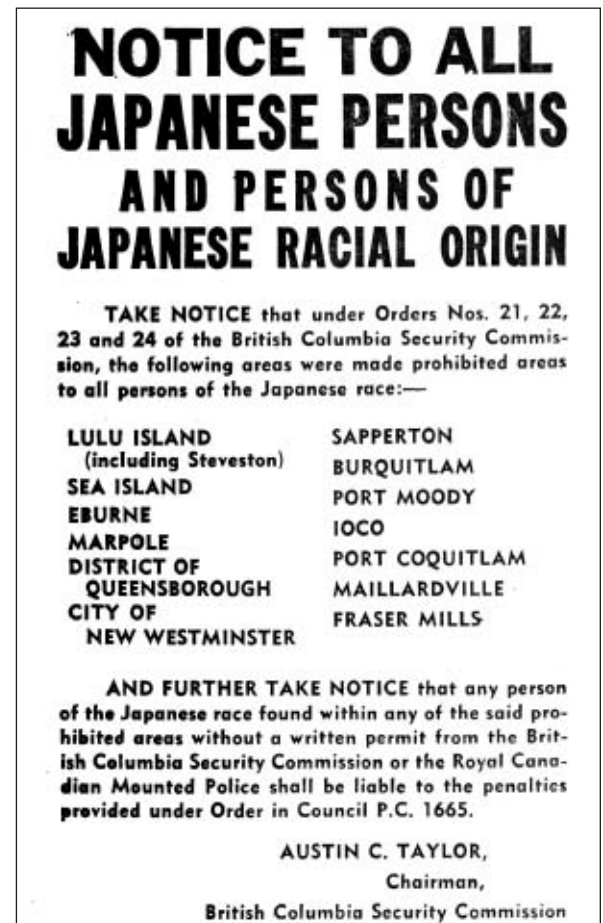
Italian Canadians were also affected. Mostly Italian men were arrested and sent to the camps, and the government seized the property of some of those arrested. In some parts of Canada, it was also declared illegal to teach the Italian language or for an Italian society or group to hold meetings. Some Italians were also forced to report to the RCMP monthly and had their relief payments cancelled and travel restricted. In 1990, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney apologized to Canada's Italian community for the internment.

During both wars, feelings of fear and anger mixed with long-standing misunderstandings and suspicions of some immigrant communities. In response to pressure from certain segments of society, the government used its powers under the War Measures Act to restrict the rights of people who were considered enemy aliens. Although these actions might be considered unjust by many Canadians today, at the time many Canadians believed restrictions on civil rights were necessary for the safety and security of all. Thus, the values of liberalism and respect for individual rights were limited by these government decisions.

**Figure 14-5** A poster that outlines the locations of the forced relocation of Japanese Canadians living in British Columbia during the Second World War.



**Figure 14-4** ▲ Bill C-331 was passed into law in 2005. It gave \$10 million to Ukrainian Canadians for use toward public education and commemorations of the internment during the First World War.



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When developing an informed response to an issue, use these questions to analyze your views and the decisions made by governments and citizens. Have you

- considered why an issue is important to you? (How do you feel about it? What do you value? Why?)
- described the experiences of others in a way that supports your point of view? Is this material factual evidence and not just an opinion?
- included evidence and viewpoints from different sources to support your response to the issue, including the viewpoints of government representatives?
- considered what the roles and responsibilities of governments and of citizens in society should be in response to the issue?

How would you feel about giving the government wide-ranging powers during a war? Why could times of war cause the government to reject the values of liberalism and act in undemocratic ways?

Limiting Individual Rights: The Emergencies Act

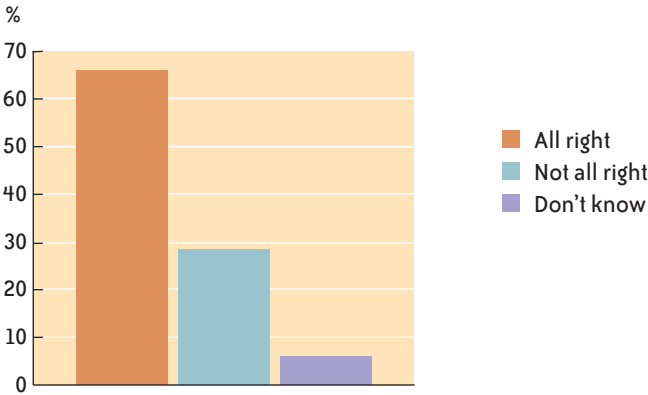
As you examined in Chapter 11, the War Measures Act was replaced by the Emergencies Act in 1988 to provide greater safeguards for the individual civil rights of people in Canada.

Many Canadians believe that the Emergencies Act has adequate safeguards to protect our individual civil rights. They point to the fact that the government’s actions during an emergency are subject to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In addition, whenever the Act is invoked (used), Parliament must meet within seven days to confirm that an emergency exists and to approve or reject invoking the Act.

Emergencies Act	
Public Welfare Emergencies	Public Order Emergencies
Severe natural disasters, such as floods, earthquakes, and ice storms	Threats to the security of Canada, such as terrorism
International Emergencies	War Emergencies
Acts of intimidation or the use of force that threaten Canadian sovereignty, security, or territory	War or other armed conflict involving Canada or any of its allies

Figure 14-6 ▲ The Emergencies Act identifies four categories of national emergencies. Some examples are shown in the chart to illustrate these categories. Any exceptional powers granted to the government are limited to those needed to address the specific emergency. Do you think this adequately limits the ability of the government to violate civil rights?

Figure 14-7 In a poll, Canadians responded to the following question about our civil rights: *If the federal government says there is a national emergency, and a majority of Parliament agrees, is it all right to suspend our civil rights?* How important are your civil rights to you? What rights would you be willing to give up so that you, your family, and your friends are safe?



Source: The Centre for Research and Information on Canada, *The Charter: Dividing or Uniting Canadians?*, Figure 3, April 2002, p. 10.

Others disagree. They argue that governments can amend or change the Act or ignore the safeguards in the name of national security and that, therefore, there is always the risk that our civil rights may be violated.

## Limiting Individual Rights: Responding to Terrorism

Today, many Canadians worry about security. The threat of terrorism has caused people to think about what their governments can and should do to protect them. As a result, you can find new security measures in malls, airports, and other public areas. Have any new security measures been introduced in your community? What measures do you think governments should take to ensure our collective security?

Following the terrorist attacks in the United States on 9/11 by al Qaeda, the United States, under President George W. Bush, declared a “War on Terror.” Many other countries, including Canada, took measures to prevent similar attacks in the future. Governments have taken measures to fight terrorism by passing laws that give authorities sweeping powers to investigate suspected terrorists. One such law is the Canadian **Anti-terrorism Act**, passed in December 2001. As you began to examine in Chapter 11, the Act increased the powers of law enforcement officials, allowing them to install wiretaps, search premises, seize goods, and detain suspected terrorists.

In an unusual move due to the urgency of the situation, the Senate and the House of Commons created the Anti-terrorism Act together. The Senate introduced a “sunset clause,” which stated that the Act must be reviewed after five years or the most restrictive parts covering preventative arrest and investigative hearings would expire on March 1, 2007. The House of Commons did let these parts of the Act expire on that date.

Canada’s Anti-terrorism Act defines terrorism as follows:

- An act or omission (something deliberately not done) committed inside or outside Canada for political, religious, or ideological purposes or causes AND
- With an intention to either: intimidate the public with regard to security, including its economic security, or to compel a person, government, or national or international organization to do or refrain [stop] from doing any act AND
- With an intent to do one of the following:
  - endanger a person’s life
  - cause death or serious bodily harm to a person by the use of violence
  - cause a serious risk to the health or safety of the public
  - cause serious public or private property damage when that is also likely to disrupt an essential service, facility, or system, or to disrupt an essential service intending to cause a serious risk to the health or safety of the public OR

—Source: **Parliament of Canada LEGISinfo, 37th Parliament, 1st Session,**

<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Sites/LOP/LEGISINFO/index.asp?Language=e&chamber=n&startlist=a&endlist=z&session=9&type=0&scope=i&query=2981&list=toc-1>



### PAUSE AND REFLECT

**Do acts that can give extraordinary powers to the government reflect the values of liberalism? How does the Emergencies Act relate to the Charter?**



**Figure 14-8** ▲ When you travel in or out of the country, customs officials can search you and your belongings if they have reasonable grounds to believe that you pose a security risk. Do you think these searches violate your civil rights?





Canadians have expressed different opinions about the Act. Some people believe it went too far. They think it compromised individual rights by giving authorities the opportunity to abuse certain individuals or groups in the name of national security. They felt it would create an opportunity for racial profiling, for example. Others argue that the Act did not go far enough to protect the common good. They believe that the right of all Canadians to be protected from terrorism outweighs the civil rights of individuals. With which perspective do you agree?

◀ **Figure 14-9** Maher Arar is a Canadian citizen who has been deeply affected by laws such as the Anti-terrorism Act. Arar, a 34-year-old wireless technology consultant, was detained by the United States on suspicion of terrorism, then sent to Syria and tortured. His detainment was due in part to inaccurate information provided to US officials by the RCMP. Arar was later cleared of all terrorism allegations by a commission of inquiry. Despite being cleared in 2008, however, Arar was still not removed from the US no-fly list. In what ways do laws like the Anti-terrorism Act challenge or limit the values of liberalism?

Law Enforcement Activity	Rights before the USA PATRIOT Act	Rights after the USA PATRIOT Act
Installing roving wiretaps	Wiretaps were restricted to a particular phone line.	Wiretaps can be applied to any phone that a person under surveillance may use. Voice-mail messages can be monitored without a person's knowledge.
Conducting secret searches	The FBI could obtain warrants to conduct secret searches or wiretaps only if there was probable cause to suspect criminal activity and their primary purpose was to gather intelligence for an investigation.	The FBI can conduct secret searches or install wiretaps to gather intelligence for an investigation without having to prove that there was probable cause to suspect criminal activity.
Monitoring the Internet	Law enforcement had to demonstrate to a judge that there was probable cause to suspect criminal activity in order to monitor a person's Internet communications.	Law enforcement does not have to demonstrate probable cause. They must only certify, and the court must accept, that Internet monitoring (including email) is relevant to an investigation.
Accessing library, bookstore, and personal records	Law enforcement agents had to obtain search warrants to access personal records.	The government may scrutinize a person's reading habits by monitoring public library and bookstore records. It may also gather personal information from doctors, banks, and other institutions without the person's knowledge.
Detaining non-citizens and immigrants on minor visa violations	Non-citizens and immigrants could be held without charge for 24 hours. Authorities had to demonstrate probable cause to lay charges.	Non-citizens and immigrants can be held for up to seven days without charge. If charged, suspects can face indefinite detention on "reasonable grounds."

▲ **Figure 14-10** Under the USA PATRIOT Act, law enforcement agencies in the United States gained sweeping new powers. Some of these powers are highlighted above. Do you think the powers given to law enforcement under the USA PATRIOT Act violate an individual's civil liberties and right to privacy? To what extent does the US government's creation of this act limit the values of liberalism?

## Limiting Individual Rights: The USA PATRIOT Act

In late 2001, the United States government also began a campaign to identify, arrest, and prosecute suspected terrorists using extraordinary powers of law enforcement created by the USA PATRIOT Act. The letters in this name stand for Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism.

Different people hold different opinions about the USA PATRIOT Act. Those who support the Act believe that these powers reduce the ability of terrorists to operate in the United States by giving the government wide-reaching access to information about anyone living in the country. They point to the fact that there have been no large-scale terrorist attacks in the United States since September 2001. Therefore, while the USA PATRIOT Act places limits on civil liberties, governments and their supporters have justified these limits as being necessary for the common good.

Opponents of the USA PATRIOT Act believe that it is unconstitutional because it violates civil rights and freedoms as guaranteed in the American Bill of Rights. They argue that the Act was passed too quickly, without taking the time to fully analyze the impact of such sweeping powers. They believe that the Act enables authorities to falsely accuse, arrest, and punish innocent people.

## Statistics, Profiling, and Racism

A challenge to or limitation of liberal values that is related to the Anti-terrorism Act and the USA PATRIOT Act is the practice of profiling—using statistics about groups to make decisions about individuals. This could be seen to go against liberalism, which holds that each person is an individual first and a member of a community second. Profiling also could be seen to illustrate how liberal values like individual rights and freedoms can sometimes limit or work against one another, allowing the rights and freedoms of some individuals to be protected while potentially limiting the rights or freedoms of others.

To consider how profiling can challenge liberalism, let us first consider some terms. **Statistics** is the science of collecting and analyzing numerical data; for example, the number of people who smoke, whether other members of their families smoke, and so on. Analysis involves looking at the data to see patterns and these findings can be used to suggest the probability (likelihood) of something happening; for example, children whose parents smoke are more likely to start smoking than children whose parents do not smoke. Based on statistics, researchers might create a **profile** of the typical smoker. While statistics may tell us something about a particular group, they do not tell us a great deal about an individual within that group. So, the question is whether liberal societies should make decisions about individuals based on information about groups.

When profiles include factors such as socio-economic level or race, they can be very controversial. For example, if, statistically, certain groups of

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Acronyms are words formed from initials, such as the USA PATRIOT Act or NATO, which stands for the North Atlantic Treaty Organizatin.



**Figure 14-11** ▲ In April 2004, President George W. Bush defends the USA PATRIOT Act on the grounds that it has been successful in keeping America safe from terrorists.



**Figure 14-12** ▲ Some Americans protest the USA PATRIOT Act as being unpatriotic and “un-American.”



▲ **Figure 14-13** Statistically, young male drivers are more likely than young female drivers to get speeding tickets. Based on this statistic and other data, decision makers could create a profile of someone likely to speed: a young male driver. This example could show different possible ways to look at liberalism in action; for example, one where the individual rights and freedoms of young male drivers is limited by profiling, and another where organizations such as insurance companies are exercising their individual rights and freedoms to set their rates as they see fit based on statistics. Suppose you are considered to be a high-risk driver because you fit the statistical profile. From your point of view, to what extent does profiling you in this way provide an example of the success or limitations of the values of liberalism in society?

### PAUSE AND REFLECT

How could profiling be used in a way that would have a negative impact on an individual—for example, a young driver? Could profiling be used to benefit individuals and society—for example, to create better driver-education programs?

people are found guilty of a particular criminal offence more often than other groups, does that mean that police, courts, or social services should treat individuals of those groups differently based on the future *probability* of them committing a crime? Should authorities use different policies and procedures with individuals of a particular group? When you think about this, consider what is best for individuals and what is best for society.

One situation in which profiling was used was in the aftermath of 9/11. The terrorist attacks in the United States were carried out by al Qaeda terrorists. Of the 19 identified terrorists, all were men, of Middle Eastern origin, and Muslim. Knowing these details, and in an attempt to fight **terrorism** against their societies and citizens, some Western liberal societies created a profile of a potential terrorist as a man with a Middle Eastern background and Muslim beliefs.

Many individuals felt the impact of this profile in the post-9/11 situation. What profiling *can* mean is that authorities (police, border guards, airport security, immigration officers, and so on) suspect, question, and even hold individuals *only* because they fit the group profile of being male, of Middle Eastern origin, and Muslim.

Amnesty International stated in a 2004 report on racial profiling in the United States that approximately 32 million Americans, a number equivalent to the population of Canada, report they have already been victims of racial profiling.

On the website American Muslim Voice, writer Abdus Sattar Ghazali describes the profiling process as Flying While Muslim (FWM).

*FWM is searching, questioning, or denying service to an airline passenger for no other reason than the person appears to be a Muslim.*

—Source: Abdus Sattar Ghazali, “Flying While Muslim.”

**American Muslim Voice, August 26, 2006,**

[http://www.amvoice-two.amuslimvoice.org/html/body\\_flying\\_while\\_muslim.html](http://www.amvoice-two.amuslimvoice.org/html/body_flying_while_muslim.html).

In using the phrase *Flying While Muslim*, the writer is recalling the phrase *Driving While Black*, a term that was created because, in some areas of the US, Black drivers noticed that they were pulled over more often than other drivers were, and questioned for what appeared to be racist reasons. And this is the charge against FWM: that this profiling is **racism**, because it pre-judges an individual based on group identity rather than considering individuals solely on the basis of their actions.

Has Canada used racial profiling in response to fears of terrorism since the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001? Those who believe that Canada has done so might use Canada’s security certificates as evidence. In Canada, the government and its policing agencies, such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), can issue security certificates for non-citizens. Issuing a security certificate for someone means that the person can be arrested, held for any length of time, and deported. This can be done



quickly and without any explanation to the Canadian media or citizens. The Canadian government and authorities believe that security certificates are necessary tools to help protect national security. Security certificates have existed since 1978 but have rarely been used. Between 1991 and 2009, 27 had been issued; and since 9/11, only 5 security certificates have been issued—all to Muslim men of Middle Eastern descent. Anne McLellan, former Liberal deputy prime minister and public safety minister, had this to say about increased measures to preserve national security:

*“Your fundamental obligation [as a member of the Government of Canada] is to the collective security of Canadians...” she said. “But quite clearly, you must do that in a way that is respectful of the rule of law, the Charter of Rights and other values and legal instruments. And I think that is always the challenge.”*

—Source: Anne McLellan, quoted in “Supreme Court ponders security certificates.” CTV online, June 21, 2006, [http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20060611/security\\_background\\_060611/20060611?hub=Canada](http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20060611/security_background_060611/20060611?hub=Canada).



PAUSE AND REFLECT

The Prime Directive on page 363 requires that one society allow other societies to “flourish or fail as their differing gifts allow”; however, profiling can be used to take action against an individual based on what group the person belongs to, not according to the individual’s “gifts” or actions. If you were a government official asked to defend post-9/11 profiling to a supporter of the Prime Directive, how would you do so? What challenges or limitations do profiling and racism present to the values of liberalism?

Summary

Societies today face situations that challenge liberal values such as individualism, the freedom of expression, self-interest, the freedom from excessive intrusion by governments, and mobility rights. Some emergencies and security legislation seems to override the protection of civil liberties, such as the historical War Measures Act, the current Emergencies Act, the Anti-terrorism Act and the USA PATRIOT Act. Situations such as calls for racial profiling challenge whether liberalism is viable today. Balancing the ideals and the values of liberalism against the practical realities and issues faced by today’s society is a complex task for individuals and their governments.

Knowledge and Understanding

- 1 Summarize the information on profiling. What are some of the key problems and benefits of using information in this manner?
- 2 The Emergencies Act and Anti-terrorism Act limit civil liberties in Canada as the USA PATRIOT Act does in the United States. Choose two of these acts and compare them using a chart like the one to the right. What parts are similar

and what are different? What civil liberties are denied? When faced with issues, why do some democratic governments restrict or limit liberal values and the rights of individuals?

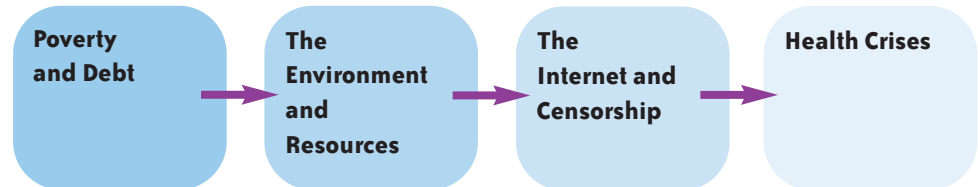
Act	Civil liberties denied	Similarities	Differences
1.			
2.			

## Challenges to Liberalism

### Question for Inquiry

2. What challenges can force societies to reconsider liberalism?

### In this section ...



In this section, we will explore issues that force societies to re-evaluate the values of liberalism. Specifically, we'll look at the following:

- poverty and debt
- environmental concerns
- resource use and development
- the Internet and censorship
- pandemics and other health crises

Some people who question whether liberalism is viable today focus on liberalism's emphasis on the individual and the individual's rights, concerns, and actions. Critics argue that the emphasis on the individual has made people in liberal societies narrow-minded and selfish, and that this is dangerous. According to this view, this emphasis on the individual can encourage us to

- single-mindedly pursue our own interests and ignore the situations of others or the collective interest of society
- see the **environment** as serving our own individual needs rather than something demanding common responsibility
- view **resources** in terms of only our individual, immediate benefit

Some supporters of liberalism would say that there is a middle ground between the extremes of **selfishness** (being concerned only about yourself) and **altruism** (unselfishness and a focus on others). They believe that the middle ground is self-interest, which they say moderates individualism with a concern for others so that liberalism can be viable today. As you read this section on challenges to liberalism, think about how you would describe the actions and attitudes (selfish, self-interested, or altruistic) involved in the various examples, and whether you think liberalism is viable in the face of the challenges and issues presented.



## Poverty and Debt

As shown in earlier chapters, **poverty** is felt by many people in Canada and around the world. Some have little more than the necessities of life—clean drinking water, food, shelter, and adequate clothing—while others do not even have that. At the extreme, there are many people living in what is known as **abject poverty**. This means that an individual lives on less than \$1 per day. As explored in Chapter 12, issues related to poverty and the distribution of wealth can lead people to challenge liberal values such as competition and economic freedom. As a result, governments have been forced to examine whose responsibility it is to address issues related to poverty and the distribution of wealth—individual citizens, groups within society, or the government.

### Poverty in Canada

In Canada, poverty is often described in relative terms, that is, by how a person compares with others in a community. The **poverty line** is like a horizontal bar below which you are said to be living in poverty. The poverty-line income level varies according to family size and community, but in each case, people who are identified as living in poverty spend a far greater share of their income on food, shelter, and clothing than is average in the same community. A November 2008 report issued by the Edmonton Social Planning Council quotes Statistics Canada data showing that 1 in 10 children lived in poverty in Alberta in 2006. (Source: “We Can Do Better: Toward an Alberta Child Poverty Reduction Strategy for Children and Families.” Edmonton Social Planning Council, [http://www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca/images/stories/pdf/We\\_Can\\_Do\\_Better.pdf](http://www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca/images/stories/pdf/We_Can_Do_Better.pdf).)

Critics say that, aside from the number of people described as living in poverty, we should be looking at other signs of poverty to understand it: signs such as the number of people using food banks or losing their homes (or who are already homeless). As well, they say, we need to look at the big picture—how people who are well-off compare to those living in poverty. In Canada, the gap between the top income-earning category and the lowest-income earning category widened over the period from 1980 to 2005.

*When looking at actual incomes of Canadians, the gap has widened between the country’s most vulnerable and the most affluent, [Michael] Shapcott [a poverty activist and policy analyst] points out... Take a closer look, and it’s only the top 20 per cent of income earners who saw their salaries rise, he says.*

—Source: Armina Liğaya, “The debate over Canada’s poverty line.”

CBC News, November 12, 2007,

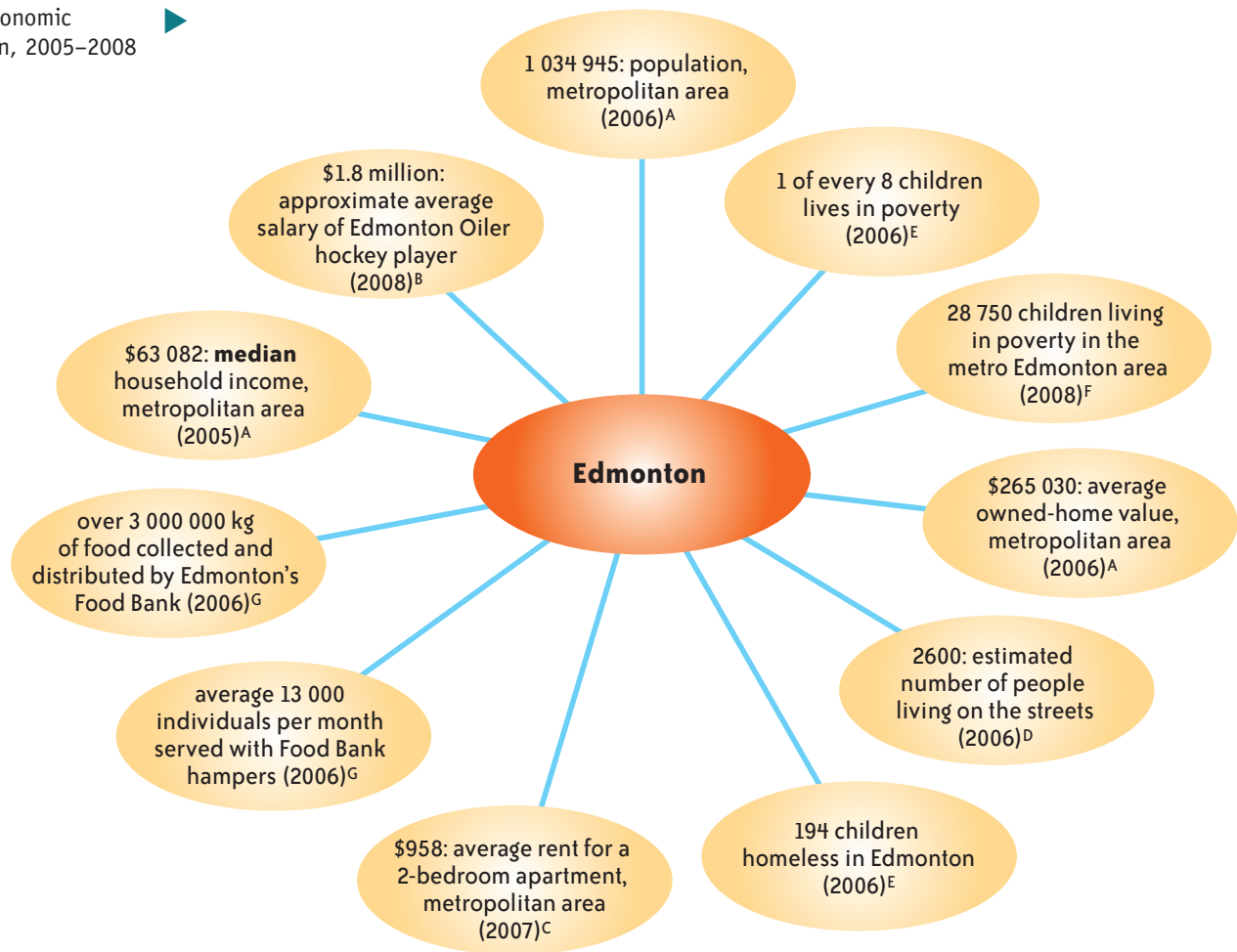
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/economy/poverty-line.html>.



**Figures 14-14, 14-15 ▲** In his book *Material World*, photographer Peter Menzel shows families in countries around the world in front of their homes with their possessions. As you look at these two contrasting photos from Western Samoa and California, what questions and comments do you have about the families’ lives, their resources, and their impact on the environment? What values of liberalism do you see reflected in the photos? How is your life in Alberta similar to or different than the lives depicted in these photographs?

To get a clearer picture of poverty, we can try to understand it for one geographical area:

Figure 14-16 Some economic indicators for Edmonton, 2005–2008



Sources:

A Statistics Canada. 2007. Edmonton, Alberta (table). 2006 Community Profiles. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa. Released March 13, 2007. <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Index.cfm?Lang=E>.

B "2008 Edmonton Oilers Salaries." Sports City, <http://www.sportscity.com/NHL/Edmonton-Oilers-Salaries>.

C "Average Rent for Two-Bedroom Apartments, Canada, Provinces, and Metropolitan Areas" table. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [http://cmhc.ca/en/corp/about/cahoob/data/data\\_004.cfm](http://cmhc.ca/en/corp/about/cahoob/data/data_004.cfm).

D "Volunteers try to put number on Edmonton homeless." CBC News Online, October 21, 2008, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/edmonton/story/2008/10/21/edm-homeless-count.html>.

E Edmonton Social Planning Council, *We Can Do Better: Toward an Alberta Child Poverty Reduction Strategy for Children and Families*. November 2008, [http://www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca/images/stories/pdf/We\\_Can\\_Do\\_Better.pdf](http://www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca/images/stories/pdf/We_Can_Do_Better.pdf).

F "1 in 10 Alberta children live in poverty: report." CBC News Online, November 21, 2008, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/calgary/story/2008/11/21/edm-child-poverty-report.html>.

G "Food for Thought." Edmonton's Food Bank, <http://www.alocalchoice.com/cdn/ab/edm/listings/listings/edfoodbank/>.

Every two years in Edmonton, volunteers with Homeward Trust Edmonton try to count the number of people in the city who are homeless. The following was one result of the October 2008 count:

*Volunteer Daryl Kreuzer said he noticed more families with children on the street this year, something he said surprises and shocks him.*

*“The implications for the children are much more severe. Not having a stable place to come home to and call home, have a good night of sleep and get ready for school the next day,” he said.*

—Source: “Volunteers try to put number on Edmonton homeless.” CBC News Online, October 21, 2008, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/edmonton/story/2008/10/21/edm-homeless-count.html>.

## Housing and Debt

One necessity of life is shelter, and it is closely linked to poverty and debt. Shelter is often costly and that cost is both a barrier to having a home and the reason that housing is often the single biggest debt individuals take on in their lives. At the same time, owning a home is part of the dream of what many individuals in North America want for themselves. Before looking at poverty and debt around the globe, let us take a look at housing and debt in North America.

As you examined in Chapter 12, in August 2008, the US faced a crisis in the housing and banking sectors, and that crisis was felt around the world. Whereas traditional mortgages required paying a down payment for part of the cost of buying a home and borrowing the rest of the payment from a bank as a mortgage, the US banking system began to allow mortgages that required no down payment. Before 2000, the average US household would be allowed a mortgage of about three times its household annual income. However, by the lending peak in 2006 and 2007, some lenders were offering mortgages that equalled about nine times a household’s annual income—and government did not intervene. Lenders were in business to make profits and thought they could do so. Some of the mortgages were not checked carefully to ensure that the borrowers had the resources to repay the mortgages. At their worst, these loans were jokingly referred to as NINJA loans (No Income, No Job, No Assets).

The relaxed lending rules and practices meant that many more individuals were able to get loans to buy houses than before. This increased the number of buyers for homes in most areas, and house prices increased about 50 per cent across the United States. As homebuyers took on huge loans to “own” their dream houses, banks were finding that more and more borrowers could not pay their mortgage payments. When that happens, the lender (that is, the bank) has the right to foreclose (that is, take possession of



▲ **Figure 14-17** This poster was created for the Salvation Army, a Christian church that was founded in Canada over 100 years ago “to provide spiritual and practical support to society’s most vulnerable.” (Source: “The History of the Salvation Army in Canada.” Salvation Army of Canada, <http://www.salvationarmy.ca/history/>.) What messages do you understand from the poster? What do you believe is its main message? What evidence can you find in the poster to support this message? To what extent does liberalism encourage people to address issues related to poverty?

## PAUSE AND REFLECT

**In what ways might values of liberalism, such as self-interest and competition, allow poverty to exist? To what extent do you believe this is true in Canada?**



## PAUSE AND REFLECT

In what ways does the example of debt crisis in the United States illustrate whether liberal values are viable?



▲ **Figure 14-18** In 20 top metropolitan areas in the United States, including Los Angeles, house prices almost doubled from 2000 to 2006. In California, in July 2008, 42 per cent of house sales were related to foreclosures.

the home to sell it to pay off the mortgage). This is what has happened in the United States in great numbers.

Consider the following statistics from the lead-up to the crisis of August 2008:

- At the end of 2007, nearly 3 million homeowners were behind on their mortgage payments.
- Of those, 1 to 2 million were at risk of foreclosure in 2008.
- By March 2008, 1.3 million homes (2 per cent of US households) were in foreclosure.
- By March 2008, 8.8 million homeowners were “underwater” on their mortgages—what they owed equalled or was greater than the market value of their homes.

Many households were both paying the lowest amount they could on mortgages and increasing their credit card debts. The average American household owed \$12 000 in credit card debt. As some critics say, this is not the American Dream. The American Dream is a dream of

*...getting a fair chance to achieve success through patience and hard work... about building up a better life in a place where opportunities are abundant and available to anyone. The Dream is an ideal that can't be bought.*

—Source: “When Did ‘The American Dream’ Become Debt?”

*The Baglady*, <http://baglady.dreamhosters.com/2007/11/28/when-did-the-american-dream-become-debt/>, November 28, 2007.

As it stands, some debt in North America seems to be the result of individuals relentlessly pursuing their self-interest and businesses pursuing profits, but without government intervening. And for some individuals, that debt means both poverty and losing their homes.

### Poverty and Debt around the World

On a global scale, poverty and debt take on a much broader meaning. As noted on page 375, abject poverty means a person lives on less than \$1 per day. According to the United Nations, more than a billion people are living in abject, or extreme, poverty.

As you read in Chapter 5, the United Nations declared **Millennium Development Goals** in 2000. One of the goals was to cut extreme poverty in half by 2015. One organization that agreed to help reach these goals is the **World Bank**. The World Bank was formed in 1944, near the end of the Second World War, to help countries rebuild after the war and to develop their industries. It quickly decided that it needed to address poverty to reach those goals, and it began giving loans—which are paid back, with or without interest—and grants—which do not need to be paid back—to countries for projects designed to help reduce poverty.

In evaluating progress, the World Bank estimates that from 1990 to 2015 extreme poverty will be reduced by no more than 40 per cent. And the Bank concludes:

[T]he bottom line is that there has been progress, but there has not been enough... [But over] the past 20 years, the absolute number of people living on less than one dollar a day has begun to fall for the first time, even as the world's population has grown by 1.6 billion people.

—Source: “FAQs: About the World Bank.” World Bank,

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTSITETOOLS/0,,contentMDK:20147466~menuPK:344189~pagePK:98400~piPK:98424~theSitePK:95474,00.html>.

Some would say that is still a success story, but critics have many complaints. For example, some criticisms are as follows:

- Borrowers never escape from their debts.
- Countries receiving World Bank money have to accept certain conditions (for example, using the money only to build roads).
- The conditions benefit wealthy countries and corporations (for example, building roads allows large multinational companies to transport products or natural resources).
- Some loans are made knowing that a country cannot pay the money back, that the money will not be used to benefit its population, or that the money will act as a bribe to ensure continued access to the country's resources.
- World Bank money pays for projects that harm the environment (for example, extensive logging or big dams).

The biggest criticism is that the World Bank is an extension of the liberal idea of free-market capitalism, and although it appears to have good intentions, some claim that it is really profiting from a vulnerable group—the world's poor. According to this idea, liberalism—or at least liberalism as practised by the World Bank—allows for poverty.

Thus, some people see issues related to poverty in our own communities and around the world as fundamental challenges to or limitations of liberalism. They ask, for example, how we can embrace liberalism, with its focus on individuals being able to pursue their own self-interests and with its objection to “excessive” government intervention, while people are homeless or hungry. Critics such as economist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus believe that poverty can be ended but that we have allowed it to exist.

*“We create institutions and policies on the basis of the way we make assumptions about us and others. We accept the fact that we will always have poor people around us. So we have had poor people around us. If we had believed that poverty is unacceptable to us, and that it should not belong to a civilized society, we would have created appropriate institutions and policies to create a poverty-free world.”*

—Source: Muhammad Yunus, quoted in *Co-op Circles*

*E-Newsletter*, vol. 3, no. 21, April 20–26, 2008,

[http://www.coady.stfx.ca/library/coop\\_circles/v3/21.htm](http://www.coady.stfx.ca/library/coop_circles/v3/21.htm).



**Figure 14-19** ▲ In 2004, Bangladeshi women Sahera Khatun (right) and Monju Begum feed chickens they bought with money borrowed from the Grameen Bank. Since Muhammad Yunus started the bank in 1997, it has helped more than 45 million people around the world. The bank offers small loans to people who do not have any financial security, allowing them to start local businesses.



## PAUSE AND REFLECT

When many communities and markets are connected, in what ways might your individual pursuit of self-interest conflict with someone else's? Should individuals in liberal societies help others or not interfere with them? In what ways do issues related to poverty and debt challenge the actions of a democratic government and the values of liberalism?



▲ **Figure 14-20** What does this cartoon say to you about liberalism's focus on the individual and whether liberalism is viable today? Summarize what you think the cartoon is implying. How could you learn more about the situations of others around the world?

## The Environment and Resources

In looking at how poverty and debt are challenges that can force societies to reconsider or limit liberalism, you have also begun to think about the challenges that **environmental concerns** and **resource use and development** can pose to liberalism today. When the pursuit of self-interest increases, it can mean buying more, using more resources, and adding more debt. And, when liberal values encourage international development projects, the issues of poverty, debt, the environment, resource use, and development are all affected by these values.

Because the earth is a shared home and resource—with actions in one area often having far-reaching and sometimes unexpected outcomes in others—the ideas and actions of individuals in their environments can affect groups and the entire planet. Some people describe the environment in the way you might describe a bank, in terms of dollar values that can be taken out or added. Others describe the environment in the way you might describe a garden: as a place to grow, tend, harvest food, and enjoy your surroundings. As you read this final part of the chapter, think about what values of liberalism are behind the ideas and actions you read about and whether they place greater importance on economic or environmental benefits. Also look for examples of self-interest, selfishness, and altruism in this section.

People often question who should decide what is best when it comes to the environment and its resources. For example, should you and you alone be able to decide what you do in your own backyard? If you support the values of self-interest, freedom from government intervention, and



◀ **Figure 14-21** This cartoon was created when companies started mining coal in the Appalachian Mountains of the United States with a process called mountain-top removal. What messages do you understand from the cartoon? How does the environment in the cartoon look like “a car with ten steering wheels and ten drivers, each driver wanting to go his or her own way”? What different interests do you see?

self-reliance, you will likely answer “yes” to this question. However, what does that mean if a river flows through your backyard and your actions change that river water? Your actions and ideas would have an impact on people downriver. At the extremes, is the environment a resource for your individual benefit or a common resource for all to care for? What role should citizens and governments play in response to environmental issues?

## The Arctic Environment

Let us take another look at an example you considered in Chapter 13, but with a different focus. Canada, the United States (Alaska), Russia, Denmark (Greenland), Sweden, Norway, and Finland all have territory within the Arctic Circle, and Iceland comes very close. All these countries are very interested in the Arctic region, as are many companies and investors.

The Arctic has a small, mainly Aboriginal population and has been left relatively untouched by the rest of the world; however, as you read in Chapter 13, rising global temperatures mean that the polar ice is shrinking and practical transportation routes through Arctic waters are opening. The following are some results: the Northwest Passage through the Arctic Ocean could become one of the busiest shipping routes in the world, and large-scale industries might soon think that developing and extracting the area’s natural resources will be worth it to them.

The Canadian government has been predicting this growing interest in the Arctic. In August 2008, the forecast was as follows:

*[T]he potential riches are breathtaking. Last month, the U.S. Geological Survey estimated nearly a quarter of the Earth’s undiscovered petroleum reserves lie in the Arctic. The Arctic is estimated to hold 90 billion barrels of undiscovered oil, more than the proven reserves of Venezuela... [The] Arctic is even better endowed [supplied] with natural gas... roughly equal to the proven reserves of the most gas-rich country on the planet, Russia...*

Meanwhile, environmentalists say the Canadian government hasn't adequately considered the ecological risks of offshore oil and gas development in issuing exploration licences in the Arctic. The Exxon Valdez disaster in 1989 [in which the tanker Exxon Valdez spilled oil off Alaska] showed how difficult it can be to clean up oil spills in Arctic waters, point out environmental groups.

"The risk of a catastrophic offshore spill is quite enhanced in the Arctic," said Stephen Hazell, executive director of the Sierra Club of Canada.

—Source: Andrew Mayeda and Randy Boswell, "Arctic Ambition: Canada's Stake in the North, part 3." [canada.com](http://www.canada.com/topics/news/features/arcticambitions/story.html?id=994c07a9-7d79-4a35-927a-f78d485df522&pk=40713),

<http://www.canada.com/topics/news/features/arcticambitions/story.html?id=994c07a9-7d79-4a35-927a-f78d485df522&pk=40713>, August 17, 2008.

Some call Arctic resource development an opportunity that is too good to pass up. Others call it too risky for the environment.

**Figure 14-22** Arguments for and against following liberal values to extract resources from the Arctic

On one side...	On the other side...
<p>A supporter of liberalism might argue for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the individual pursuit of wealth</li> <li>little or no government interference</li> <li>self-reliance</li> <li>the opportunity to supply consumers with a resource that is in high demand</li> </ul>	<p>A critic of liberalism might argue that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>protection of the fragile environment outweighs the pursuit of wealth by individuals</li> <li>government regulations for resource development are necessary to minimize environmental impacts</li> </ul>

Critics of liberal values believe that the interests of a group should outweigh the individual pursuit of profit. Are liberal societies flexible enough to do this in the face of big profit incentives and growing resource needs?

**Figure 14-23** According to the cartoon, what is the future of the Arctic? Does the future depicted by the cartoonist encourage you to embrace or reconsider liberalism? To what extent is your point of view similar to or different from the cartoonist's view on this issue? How do the development and use of resources and their impact on the environment challenge the values of liberalism?





## Arctic Resources

Arctic activist for Greenpeace Melanie Duchin says,

*“There has to be a moratorium [legal freeze] on commercial and industrial activities in the Arctic [until] there is some form of treaty that is transparent, participatory and genuinely protects the natural resources of the region.”*

*“And, like the Antarctic Treaty, it should protect the Arctic as a scientific preserve free from territorial claims and military activity.”*

*Beyond the moratorium, she says, there should be no oil and gas exploration in the Arctic, and she is appalled at the idea of turning the Arctic into a shipping superhighway.*

**—Melanie Duchin, quoted in Leigh Phillips, “Europe’s Arctic adventure—Soybeans and oil spills.” *EU Observer*, November 12, 2008, <http://euobserver.com/880/27038>.**

Clive Desire-Tesar, a Canadian with the World Wildlife Fund’s International Arctic Programme, headquartered in Oslo, says,

*“We’re not opposed to oil and gas development everywhere, but the Arctic is so fragile.”*

*“It is just that there is simply no effective way of cleaning up oil spills in ice-covered waters, and for as long as that’s the case, there should be a moratorium on further exploration in Arctic waters,” he says, adding that the organisation is “relatively less concerned about gas.”*

*“The trick is to strike the right balance between the environment and development.”*

**—Clive Desire-Tesar, quoted in Leigh Phillips, “Europe’s Arctic adventure—Soybeans and oil spills.” *EU Observer*, November 12, 2008, <http://euobserver.com/880/27038>.**

According to Johan Petter Barlindhaug, who leads North Energy, a northern-Norway-based oil-and-gas start-up company exploring energy sources on the Norwegian continental shelf,

*[T]he melting Arctic could offer northern peoples, who have historically lived in a very much underdeveloped region, a chance to have similar standards of living as those who live in the cities and towns further south.*



*“Climate change poses lots of threats, but it also opens up a range of possibilities,”*  
[Barlindhaug] says.

—Johan Petter Barlindhaug, quoted in Leigh Phillips,  
“Europe’s Arctic adventure—The new cold rush for resources.”  
*EU Observer*, November 7, 2008, <http://euobserver.com/880/27035>.

In a speech to the Resource Expo 2005, Strategies for Indigenous Self-Reliance, given on November 1, 2005, Premier Paul Okalik emphasized the risks and benefits of Arctic resource development.

*“Along with the vast and largely untapped mineral deposits Nunavut also has oil and gas. It’s estimated that we have up to 15% of Canada’s total petroleum reserves, and for better or worse changing environmental conditions will make these resources more accessible...”*

*Along with providing a positive business climate, our greatest responsibility to those looking to invest in Nunavut is to ensure an educated and skilled population... The Government of Nunavut fully supports the responsible exploration and development of the territories’ mineral resources. We expect these developments to be economically viable, environmentally sustainable and beneficial to both investors and people of Nunavut.”*

—Paul Okalik, speech to the Resource Expo 2005,  
Vancouver, British Columbia,  
<http://www.native-invest-trade.com/pdf/Premier%20Paul%20Okalik-Nunavut.pdf>.



▲ **Figure 14-24** Paul Okalik,  
Premier of Nunavut, 1999–2008

- 1 To what extent does each speaker’s point of view reflect liberal values such as self-interest?
- 2 What role do you think citizens should play regarding environmental issues?
- 3 To what extent do you think liberalism can be flexible on the question of whether the environment should serve individual needs or be a common responsibility? Do governments need to limit liberal values in response to environmental issues?

## The Internet and Censorship

As you know, modern technology has made it possible for almost anyone to transmit ideas and information across a room or around the world in seconds—to reach one person or millions. The sender of this information can become known for these ideas or remain anonymous. Sometimes this ease in transmitting ideas and information seems harmless—in fact, it seems like freedom of expression at its best. Other times, many societies and individuals question whether some of these types of online messages should be allowed.

How would you respond to the following?



Messages such as a	Messages that
personal note	advocate violence against specific groups of people
joke	show an execution
inspirational letter	include child pornography
request for support for people in need	teach viewers how to make weapons to harm others
blog about a hobby	teach people how to harm themselves

◀ **Figure 14-25** Types of messages that can be posted online. Should government limit people’s access to any of them?

For a long time, those who have supported liberalism have supported key values such as freedom of expression, self-interest, and freedom from **excessive intrusion** from government, but today the Internet presents new challenges to these values. Is it practical to uphold these values in today’s society when responding to issues related to the Internet?

From earlier chapters in this text, you know that Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees many freedoms in Canada, including the freedoms of conscience, expression, and communication media; however, the Charter’s guarantee of rights and freedoms is limited. It is

*...subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.*

—Source: **Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982).**  
**Department of Justice, Canada,**  
<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter#garantie>.

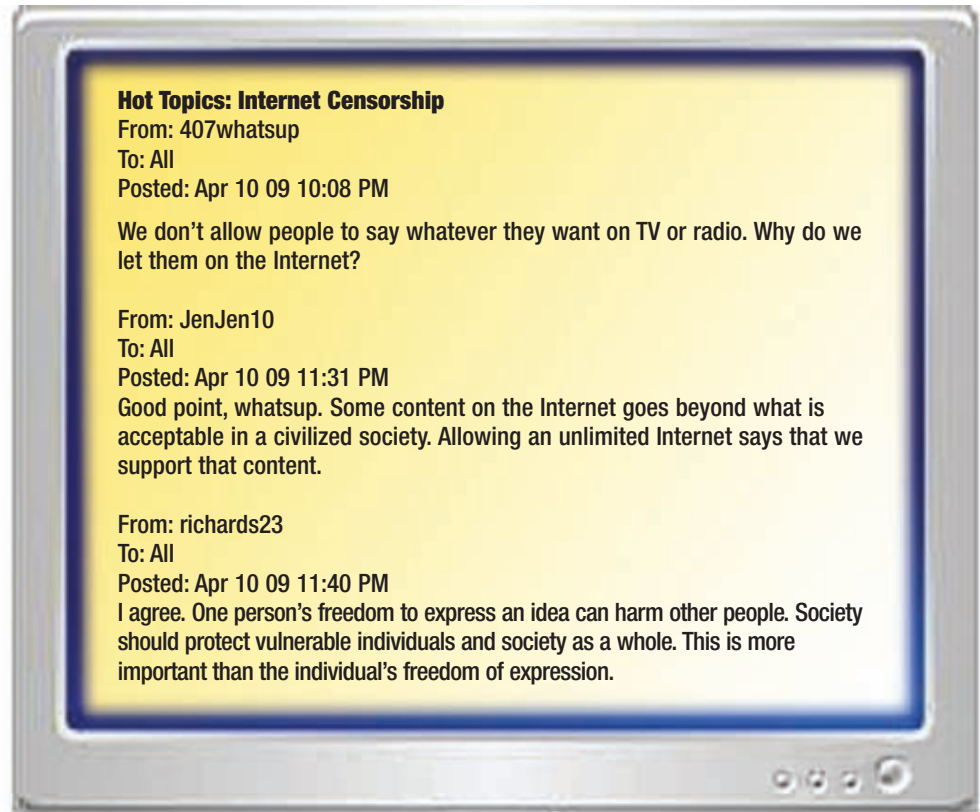
The Supreme Court of Canada, which decides how the Charter should be interpreted, has generally ruled against censorship of the Internet. This means that it has decided that censoring the Internet is *not* “justified in a free and democratic society.” Thus, individuals can choose to create and transmit ideas and information, and other individuals can choose whether or not to view these expressions.

Liberalism holds that individuals must be able to act without excessive intrusion from government; however, some people think that censoring the Internet would not be excessive in some situations.



▶ **Figure 14-26** In August 2008, Canadian cartoonist Michael de Adder commented on China’s censorship of all media, including the Internet. At the government’s insistence, Chinese service providers monitor citizens’ emails and block websites that criticize the government.

**Figure 14-27** Points that people may raise regarding the issue of whether government should censor the Internet



Asking government to decide on what is moral—what is “right,” and what is “wrong”—is a challenge in Canadian society. Although Canadian lawmakers identify what is criminal (for example, murder), that is not the same as creating a uniform moral code. As a society, we allow individuals to make decisions for themselves and their families regarding morality as long as it is not against Canadian law.

To consider this further, here are some words from former Canadian prime minister John G. Diefenbaker. Long before the Internet was developed, he said:

*“Freedom includes the right to say what others may object to and resent... The essence of citizenship is to be tolerant of strong and provocative words.”*

—Source: John G. Diefenbaker, House of Commons, April 9, 1970. ConservativeForum.org,

<http://www.conservativeforum.org/quotelist.asp?SearchType=5&Interest=3>.

Diefenbaker also made the distinction that

*“...freedom is the right to be wrong, not the right to do wrong.”*

—Source: John G. Diefenbaker, March 11, 1958. Diefenbaker Web, <http://www.ggower.com/dief/quote.shtml>.

Based on these quotations, we can tell that Diefenbaker thought that words were powerful, but also that he saw a difference between expressing

ideas and beliefs versus acting on them. As you consider whether a liberal society, such as Canada's, should limit free expression on the Internet, consider whether this distinction could have an impact on your ideas.

One situation that challenged the liberal value of free expression and the freedom of individuals to do what they wished was the “Kick a Ginger” campaign on the Internet. After an episode of the popular television show *South Park* focused on one character's attitude toward redheads, a group on the social networking website Facebook campaigned to make a November 2008 school day “Kick a Ginger Day.” That day, some red-haired students stayed home from school in fear, other red-haired students were bullied at school, and some students were suspended for their actions (for example, beating up a red-headed teen).

This situation had students, teachers, parents, and police asking who was responsible and what could (or should) be done. Some people wondered whether the *South Park* television episode and resulting webpage should be blamed, held accountable, or even censored.

*Brenda Morrison, a criminology professor at Simon Fraser University, said she was shocked to find out about the day. Morrison said social networking websites such as Facebook and MySpace provide conduits [channels] that make bullying in schools much easier, as they allow information to spread rapidly with little supervision from adults or authorities.*

*“Anything that legitimizes [bullying], we should take care to control, as a community, as caring adults,” she said.*

—Source: Catherine Rolfsen et al., “Teen behind ‘kick a redhead’ day apologizes for joke.” *Vancouver Sun*, November 21, 2008, <http://www.canada.com/vancouversun/news/westcoastnews/story.html?id=a4b17d74-9498-408a-ba06-df3fde218972&p=2>.

In one news article about the situation and its aftermath, the president of the BC Teachers' Federation, Irene Lanziger, had this to say:

*“Some kids will excuse it on the grounds of ‘it's just a joke, it's not that serious,’ but I think when you really get into that discussion with kids, the vast majority of them will come to the conclusion...that nothing that harms other people should be acceptable in a society.”*

—Source: Irene Lanziger, quoted in “‘Kick a Ginger’ tumult shows anti-bullying effort not working: teacher.” *CBC News*, November 23, 2008, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2008/11/23/bc-kick-ginger-anti-bullying.html?ref=rss>.

## Health Crises

Many individuals in liberal societies travel and consider mobility a right—something they feel is an individual choice in their self-interest. However, travellers can carry and spread disease. When liberal societies face a health crisis, the threat of disease can bring into question the individual rights of travellers, the roles of authorities, and the interests of individuals versus the



### PAUSE AND REFLECT

**What do you think? In this situation, people using a website promoted violence against a particular group. Who is responsible for the harm done to some students? Should the individuals who promoted the idea be held responsible? What about those who acted on the idea? Should the community and caring adults take control, and if so, how? How does censorship challenge or limit the values of liberalism?**

## PAUSE AND REFLECT

**In the situation of a contagious international traveller, which individual interests and liberal values are at stake? Which group interests are at stake? How should governments and citizens act in response to issues related to a potential health crisis?**

interests of the group. Some people wonder whether or not authorities in liberal societies facing a health crisis should severely restrict individual freedoms for the short term. As you read the following examples, think about what you would decide if you were a government official.

On May 24, 2007, American Andrew Speaker was diagnosed with a drug-resistant form of tuberculosis and was advised by US health officials not to travel. Speaker flew to Europe for his honeymoon anyway. While he was in Rome, US health officials again advised him to go into hospital there or to fly back to the US on an expensive air ambulance. Instead, Speaker flew to North America using Czech Airlines. His flight landed in Montréal, where he rented a car and continued his journey. He crossed the Canada–US border despite an alert for customs officials to hold him at the border.

Seven Canadian and two Czech passengers, and the Czech Airlines company, are suing Andrew Speaker for his decision to fly on that flight. Speaker defends his decision by stating that he was not specifically *ordered* not to fly, nor was he prevented from flying by health officials.

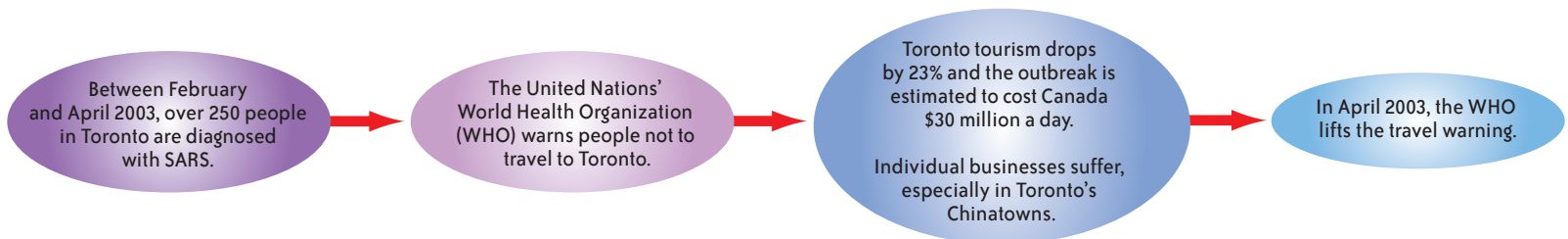
The individuals suing Speaker say that, whether or not they test positive for tuberculosis, they are angry about his complete disregard for their health and well-being. However, some people say that the decision should not have been left up to Speaker. They believe that health officials, customs officials, and other government agencies should have the right to physically detain and isolate citizens with diseases that can spread.

Another example is the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak of 2003. SARS was first reported in Asia in February 2003, and spread to countries in North America, South America, Europe, and Asia. A total of 8098 people worldwide became sick with SARS and 774 died before the disease was contained.

Examine Figure 14-28 to assess the response to SARS by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Some people argue that the WHO acted responsibly and protected the global community. Other people, including some Canadian government officials, criticized the WHO. They pointed to the severe economic consequences for Toronto and suggested that the SARS “pandemic” was exaggerated. A **pandemic** is the emergence of a new infectious disease that causes serious illness among a wide ranging population. Some people said that smoking and car accidents kill more people per year than SARS did. Was the WHO’s response consistent with liberal values?

**Figure 14-28** This diagram illustrates how quickly a disease can spread. How important is it for a government to take action to limit the spread of diseases? Should people’s freedoms be limited during an outbreak? ▼



Source: Neil Seeman, “Toronto Under SARS,” *National Review Online*, April 25, 2003, <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-seeman042503.asp>.





◀ **Figure 14-29** SARS is highly contagious and is spread through close person-to-person contact, especially when people cough or sneeze. As a precaution during the 2003 SARS outbreak, many wore medical masks to protect themselves. In Toronto, those people who were believed to have had contact with the SARS virus were placed under quarantine, meaning they had to stay at home in isolation. Nevertheless, some chose to break those orders and put others in the community at risk. What responsibilities do governments have in responding to issues related to pandemics? How can a pandemic challenge or limit the values of liberalism? Are there any pandemics or health crises providing a challenge in the world today?

## Summary

Today, the challenges of issues related to **poverty**, **debt**, **environmental concerns**, **resource use and development**, **Internet censorship**, and **health crises** can force societies to reconsider or limit the application of liberal values. Examples of poverty and wealth, including homelessness, debt and housing crises, and decisions about environmental issues and their possible impacts can influence how we feel about the extent to which liberalism is viable today. The key questions are whether moderate **self-interest**—rather than **selfishness** or **altruism**—can address these challenges to liberalism and what roles governments and citizens should play in doing so. How you, as a citizen, should respond is for you to decide as you consider whether or not you should embrace liberalism as an ideology.

## Knowledge and Understanding

- 1 Some thinkers believe that poverty is a fundamental challenge to liberalism because following liberal values can lead to poverty. Review the section to summarize the facts and ideas that support the belief that liberalism can lead to poverty. Then, comment on the belief: Do you agree? Would you support a political party that proposes to spend taxpayers' money to meet the needs of Canadians living in poverty? What sort of ideology does your answer reveal?
- 2 On a piece of paper, draw a line down the centre. On one side, use the title "Reasons and evidence to censor the Internet." On the other side, use the title "Reasons and evidence to not censor the Internet." List reasons and evidence that could be used from this section of the chapter first, and then add your own reasons and evidence beneath.
- 3 Identify at least one good example of an issue from the chapter and from the news today related to each of the following: poverty, debt, environment, censorship, and a health crisis. For each example, please note in a chart or on a web diagram
  - a) the rights and interests of individuals
  - b) the rights and interests of groups
  - c) the liberal values being challenged
- 4 Which issue examined in the chapter is most important to you and your values? Why? How do you believe you and other citizens and democratic governments could best respond to this issue?



## INVESTIGATION AND EXPLORATION

### Land Use in Madagascar

#### Something to Think About:

Key values of liberalism include the freedom to act in our own self-interest, individual pursuit of wealth, little or no government interference, competition, and self-reliance. However, we often live and act as part of a group with some collective interests, and our individual actions can have an impact on others and the environment. How can we make sense of the many different individual self-interests and group interests in a society, especially when scarce resources or a fragile environment may be at stake?

#### An Example:

Madagascar might be best known for its island environment where 80 per cent of its animals and plants are unique to the island—in other words, they are found nowhere else on the planet. It is part of a worldwide trend in which the “rich world buys rights to the fields of the poor.” (Source: “Rich world buys rights to the fields of the poor.” *Guardian Weekly*, November 28, 2008, p. 10.) For example, people, countries, and corporations have been buying land in countries such as Brazil, Madagascar, the Philippines, Russia, Ukraine, Sudan, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Egypt, and Pakistan.

Madagascar is the world’s fourth largest island. It lies off the southeast coast of Africa. The area in the south is desert, and the country has faced drought, food crises, and famine in recent years. In contrast, South Korea is a much smaller country, and a significant importer of food. In the fall of 2008, a South Korean company announced its plan for a 99-year lease for 1 000 000 hectares of land in Madagascar. The company’s goal was to grow corn on the land and lease an additional 120 000 hectares to produce palm oil using a South African workforce. This deal is causing worries about Madagascar’s own people, food supply, and island environment. The South Korean company estimates that the lease will create 70 000 jobs. The Madagascar government says the lease payments will go into local economies and infrastructure, such as road-building projects.

Because many countries that are poor are being approached for their farmland, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization head, Jacques Diouf, is concerned.

*“[The] controversial rise in land deals could create a ‘neo-colonialism’ [new kind of colonialism], with poor states producing food for the rich at the expense of their own hungry people.”*

—Jacques Diouf, quoted in “Rich world buys rights to the fields of the poor.” *Guardian Weekly*, November 28, 2008, p. 1.



▲ **Figure 14-30** Corn is important to the South Korean diet, but Madagascar’s farmers have traditionally grown rice. Some environmentalists and international food experts are worried about the poor family farmers, cattle herders of western Madagascar (the location of the land lease), and the island’s unique species.

#### Questions for Reflection

- 1 What values of liberalism can you identify in the example of Madagascar? How can liberal society address the challenges to its values that this issue presents? How can government decisions that allow foreign control of land affect people’s rights and their quality of life? Share and compare your responses in a group.
- 2 Compose a response—in a format of your choice—that explains and defends your position on this issue: To what extent should governments in developing countries allow “the rich world to buy rights to the fields of the poor”? Consider the perspectives of different groups who would find this issue important, and whether they would tend to support individualistic liberal values or collective values. You may wish to refer to the Reading Guide on page 368 as you develop your response.

## FURTHER EXPLORATION

- 1 Divide a piece of paper in half. On one half, write the heading “Aspects of liberalism with which I most agree,” and on the other half write “Aspects of liberalism with which I most disagree.” Brainstorm ideas under each heading. After you have finished brainstorming, determine whether or not the aspects with which you most agree are strong enough to counter the aspects with which you most disagree. To what extent is liberalism a viable ideology in your life, especially when you are responding to a difficult issue?
- 2 Look over the visuals and other images within this chapter. Which ones do you think are most helpful in understanding the situations and issues that can challenge liberalism today? Explain how they have helped you. What other visuals and images might you create or research to deepen your understanding of liberalism and its viability today in the face of difficult issues?
- 3 In society today, we face situations and enduring issues such as censorship, terrorism, racism, pandemics and other health crises, poverty and debt, homelessness, and concerns for the environment and about resources. These issues challenge liberalism, but how might another ideology address these challenges? Choose one or two of these issues, and explain how a government that is not a liberal democracy (for example, a dictatorship) might address the situation. Present your answer in an editorial piece of writing.
- 4 Revisit the “Prime Directive” on page 363. What would be the Prime Directive for liberalism? Do you believe that liberalism’s Prime Directive is viable in response to issues in the world today? Explain your point of view with reference to issues and examples in this chapter.

## Chapter Summary and Reflection

In this chapter, you looked at situations and issues that present challenges to liberalism today. You looked at how government has sometimes restricted individual and collective rights, including present-day examples related to balancing civil liberties with the need for public security through laws such as the War Measures Act, Emergencies Act, and the Anti-terrorism Act. You explored how **terrorism**, **racism**, and profiling in the period since 9/11 have influenced limits placed on liberal values. You also considered how enduring issues, including **poverty and debt** both in North America and worldwide, the **environment**, **resource use and development**, and health crises or **pandemics**, create situations in which people might want to place limitations on the values and practices of liberalism. As well, you

considered arguments for and against **censorship** of the Internet and how they relate to the values of liberalism.

The chapter presented examples from Canada and around the world, and of individual and group actions. As you looked at examples of contemporary issues to see how practical and flexible liberalism can be, you considered the Chapter Issue: *To what extent are the values of liberalism viable in response to issues today?* By exploring the values of liberalism through examples and the concepts of **self-interest**, **selfishness**, and **altruism**, you will be closer to finding your own answer to the Related Issue: *To what extent are the values of liberalism viable?* and to the Key Issue: *To what extent should we embrace an ideology?*